

THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE BY FAITH

JESU JUVA!

25 OCTOBER 1992--TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ST PAUL MN
KENNETH F. KORBY, THD HYMNS (LW) 209;210; 334; 155*; 362
PSALM 62 (TLH) 6;261; 231*; 371
HABAKKUK 1:1-3; 2:1-4
2 TIMOTHY 1:3-14
SAINT LUKE 17:1-10

HE WHO THROUGH FAITH IS RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE

ALTHOUGH WE SHALL (DV) CELEBRATE THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH ON SATURDAY NEXT, WE HAVE LEFT THE RED ON THE ALTAR--COLOR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, OF FIRE AND LOVE, OF MARTYRDOM AND LIFE IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS. MANY OF OUR SISTER CHURCHES WILL BE CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION TODAY.

THE THEME OF THIS DAY'S CELEBRATION IS THE GOSPEL OF GOD CONCERNING HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, THE MESSAGE THAT "HE WHO THROUGH FAITH IS RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE." THAT IS, THE REFORMATION IS THE RENEWAL OF CONTRITION AND REPENTANCE.

FOR MANY PEOPLE THIS MESSAGE OF LIFE IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH SEEMS STRANGE, RELIGIOUS, AND REMOTE. AND YET, IF WE LOOK AT OUR TIMES, AS THE PROPHET HABAKKUK LOOKED AT HIS TIMES, WE SEE "OUTRAGE AND VIOLENCE, CONTENTION AND DISCORD." WE ARE IN A LITIGIOUS SOCIETY WHERE ALMOST EVERYONE IS IN CONTENTION FOR RIGHTS. AS GOD ASKED JOB, SO HE ASKS US, "WILL YOU PUT ME IN THE WRONG SO THAT YOU MAY BE PUT IN THE RIGHT?" IN SUCH A WORLD, HABBAKUK GOES TO HIS WATCHTOWER TO SEE AND HEAR. WHAT HE RECEIVES IS THE VISION AND THE MESSAGE, ONE TO BE WRITTEN LARGE SO THAT

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PEOPLE IN FLIGHT AND IN A HURRY MAY SEE IT: HE WHO THROUGH FAITH IS RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE.

JESUS MAKES IT PLAIN TO US THAT THE WORLD IN WHICH THIS MESSAGE IS GIVEN IS NO FRIEND OF GRACE, NO FRIEND OF FAITH. "OFFENSES" ARE IN THE WORLD. JESUS IS NOT REFERRING TO HURT FEELINGS WHEN HE SPEAKS OF OFFENSES. HE IS REFERRING TO THOSE WORDS AND ACTIONS WHICH SAY AND DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS NOT RIGHT TO TRUST JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD WHO BY HIS CROSS HAS DELIVERED YOU FROM SIN AND DEATH AND WILL DELIVER YOU OVER TO EVERLASTING JOY IN LIFE WITH HIM.

GOD'S "LITTLE ONES" CAN BE OFFENDED IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, BUT THERE IS ALWAYS ONE POINT AND ONE POINT ONLY: TRIP THEM UP IN BELIEVING THAT JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS GIVEN TO US TO MAKE US RIGHT WITH HIM IN THE LIFE OF FAITH. THAT IS THE WORLD'S GOAL; THAT IS THE GOAL OF ALL WORLDINGS WHO THINK WITH THE WORLD. SUCH OFFENSE CAN BE ADMINISTERED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

ONE IS TO NEGLECT TO TEACH THE BELIEVERS THAT ALONE IN THE GOSPEL OF GOD IS GOD'S REVELATION AND WORK OF DELIVERING US FROM DEATH AND GIVING US EVERLASTING LIFE. ALWAYS THERE LURKS IN THE HUMAN BREAST THAT WE CAN DO SOMETHING OR BE SOMETHING THAT WILL PUT GOD UNDER OBLIGATION TO US--LIKE THE SERVANT WHO THINKS IF HE HAS WORKED HARD ALL DAY AT HIS JOY AND COMES HOME IN THE EVENING, SURELY THE MASTER WILL PREPARE SUPPER FOR HIM AND SAY, "MY GOOD SERVANT, YOU HAVE WORKED SO HARD TODAY THAT I HAVE DONE YOUR WORK OF PREPARING SUPPER. PLEASE SIT DOWN AND LET ME BE YOUR WAITER."

TWO: IF THE TEACHING OF THE GOSPEL IS NOT

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NEGLECTED, THE TRIPPING UP OF THE BELIEVERS CAN HAPPEN BY ALTERING THAT GOSPEL. TO GUARD IN SAFETY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS GOD HAS GIVEN PROPHETS AND APOSTLES AND PASTORS TO GUARD AND TEACH THAT MESSAGE PURELY AND TRULY.

HABBAKUK SAW AND HEARD IT. HE WAS TOLD: WRITE IT LARGE THAT EVEN WHO RUNS CAN READ IT. THE TIME IS NOW FOR THE MESSAGE.

WE HEARD ST PAUL EXHORT THE YOUNG PASTOR TIMOTHY TO STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD GIVEN TO HIM WHEN PAUL LAID HANDS ON HIM IN HOLY ORDINATION. DO NOT BE ASHAMED TO TESTIFY TO THE LORD, SAID PAUL. DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST OR THE APOSTLE. YOU MAY TRUST THIS CHRIST, THIS GOOD NEWS FROM GOD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FREELY GIVEN TO BE RECEIVED FOR FAITH. THIS CHRIST HIMSELF WILL BRING YOU SAFELY THROUGH TO THAT DAY OF HIS APPEARING.

GUARD THAT MESSAGE AND TEACH IT. AS WITH PAUL, SO WITH YOU, THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO TURN BACK TO THE WORLD, WHO TURN AWAY FROM THE TRUTH. BUT YOU? YOU SUFFER LIKE A GOOD SOLDIER, STANDING AT YOUR POST.

LAST SUNDAY WE HEARD ST PAUL SAY, FIRST OF ALL, TO GUARD THAT MESSAGE, ENGAGE THE WHOLE CHURCH IN SUPPLICATION AND PRAYER, INTERCESSION AND THANKSGIVING.

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL JESUS SPEAKS OF ANOTHER WAY TO EXERCISE THIS GOSPEL OF FORGIVENESS OF SINS. IF YOUR BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU, "REBUKE HIM." DO NOT CONSIDER HIM AN ENEMY OR TREAT HIM AS A DISEASED OUTSIDER. LOOK AT HIM WITH TENDERNESS AND COMPASSION. SPEAK WITH MODESTY, MEEKNESS, AND THE DESIRE THAT HE HEAR YOU.

WHEN HE SAYS, "I REPENT," FORGIVE HIM. DO NOT GROW WEARY IN HEARING AND SAYING THAT WORD. WEARY NOT OF

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TRUSTING IN, LOVING, AND LIVING ON THAT WORD. THE CHURCH STANDS OR FALLS BY THIS GOSPEL OF THE FREE AND PURE FORGIVENESS OF SINS FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS, PREACHED, HEARD, BELIEVED, AND LIVED. WHERE THIS GOSPEL IS NOT PREACHED OR HEARD OR BELIEVED, THERE IS NO CHURCH--ONLY A RELIGIOUS SOCIETY.

OFFENSES THERE WILL BE IN THE WORLD. OUR LORD TEACHES US THIS FACT. OUR EXPERIENCE CONFORMS TO THAT WORD. THE OFFENSES WHEN WE REFUSE TO USE THIS GOSPEL FOR RIGHTING OUR LIVES WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER; WHEN WE NEGLECT TO USE THIS WORD OF FORGIVENESS AND ARE SEDUCED OR LED AWAY TO ANOTHER WAY OF RIGHTING OUR LIVES WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER.

LITTLE WONDER THE DISCIPLES BLURTED OUT: "LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH." THE GREAT STONE OF STUMBLING IS JESUS HIMSELF, THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN LORD. GOD SELECTED THIS JESUS TO BE THE CORNER STONE OF HIS CHURCH. IN THAT CHURCH YOU ARE BUILT UP INTO A HOLY TEMPLE, A PRIESTHOOD TO OFFER SACRIFICES OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING, DECLARING TO EACH OTHER AND TO THE WORLD THE WONDERFUL DEEDS OF GOD--THE HEAVENLY WORD OF THE HOLY ABSOLUTION.

JESUS IS THE ONE WHO DESTROYED OUR DEATH BY HIS DEATH. DEEP INTO OUR SIN AND SHAME AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS HE WAS SUNK, AND BURIED IN HIS DEATH IN THE TOMB. BUT HE BURST THE BONDS OF DEATH AND ROSE FROM THE GRAVE. MERCY AND TRUTH HAVE SPRUNG FROM THE EARTH. RIGHTEOUS AND PEACE HAVE KISSED EACH OTHER. WE ARE TAUGHT BY HIM TO PRAY, "AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION." BY HIS MERCY WE WHO DAILY SIN MUCH ARE FORGIVEN. WHEN THE DEVIL, THE WORLD, AND OUR OWN NATIVE

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SELF SEEKS TO SEDUCE US INTO A SUPERSTITIOUS 'OTHER FAITH,' DESPAIR, AND OTHER GREAT SHAME OF VICE, WE PRAY FOR HIM TO GUARD AND SUSTAIN US, THAT "THOUGH WE ARE ASSAILED BY THEM, THAT STILL WE MAY FINALLY OVERCOME AND OBTAIN THE VICTORY. LED BY HIM INTO LIFE HIMSELF, WE DARE TO TRUST HIS MERCY AND THEREFORE LEARN TO BE MERCIFUL TO THE SINNERS AROUND US. "SO WILL WE ALSO HEARTILY FORGIVE AND READILY DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US."

TODAY, AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS, WE HAVE BEEN DISCIPLINED TO SING HIS PRAISES, TO CRY OUT IN SUPPLICATION AND INTERCESSION. WE HAVE IMPORED THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE TRUE FAITH, THE TRUE GOSPEL, THE TRUE LIFE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. LET US AGAIN SAY OUR "AMEN."